

For Development Services, 2005 was not just another typical year... it was busier than the previous year. During 2005, the county received 1965 applications for preliminary plan reviews. This represents an increase of 291 permits for a 15% increase over 2004 (with 1674 permit requests). The increased 2005 permit activity levels represent a 17% increase over the previous 5-year average of 1631 permits per year.

The largest permit increase was for land division applications. In 2005, the county received 142 land division requests, compared to 109 in 2004, and 73 for the previous 5-year average. This represents a 23% increase over 2004 and 49% increase over the previous 5-year average.

In 2005, land division applications called for a total of 2,182 new lots. In 2004, the number of proposed new lots totaled 2,241, and the previous 5-year average was 1,460 new lots per year.

Site plan review permits (i.e., review of commercial and industrial developments) remained relatively stable. In 2005, a total of 76 site plan permits were received compared to 69 for 2004 and 89 for the previous 5-year average.

There are a number of minor applications that showed a substantial increase in activity levels during 2005. They are listed below, together with the 2004 and previous 5-year average levels.

**Table 3 - Minor Permit Activity Level Comparison
With 2004 and Previous 5-year Averages**

| Type of Permit | 2005 Permits | 2004 Permits | 5- year Average |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Boundary Line Adjustment | 106 | 80 | 32 |
| Home Businesses | 156 | 46 | 35 |
| Legal Lot Determination | 135 | 98 | 77 |
| Shoreline | 25 | 12 | 10 |

The Boundary Line adjustment, Legal Lot Determination and Shoreline permit increases are in line with the higher overall permit volume in 2005. The Home Business permit increases in 2005 reflect the newly adopted Home Business requirements and application deadline for exiting businesses.

**Table 4 - Appeal Permit Activity Level Comparison
With 2004 and Previous 5-year Averages**

| Type of Permit | 2005 Permits | 2004 Permits | 5- year Average |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Appeals | 17 | 36 | 20 |

As revealed above, the number of appeals for 2005 returned to just below the 5-year average. The 36 appeals for 2004 appear to be a 1-year aberration.

Based upon the above analysis, the county can expect about a 15% increase in overall permit activity levels for 2006, with a more significant increase in land division activities. Two variables that will affect this estimate include:

1. Lifting of urban holding areas; and,
2. City of Vancouver annexations.

Process and Resource Analysis:

(Note: The following analysis is based upon preliminary plan review decisions issues in 2005, which is different from the total permits received for processing, as noted above.)

The continued increase in permit activity is having its effects on personnel, and logistics associated with public hearings.

The number of employees (i.e., planners) assigned to preliminary plan review has remained constant since 1998. Within this 8-year period, the division has experienced a 35% increase in total land use permits issued. In spite of this significant increase in permit activity levels, the division's performance relative to meeting decision deadlines has improved from about 54% to about 100%.

In 2003, the Development Services Division conducted a capacity analysis relative to the total number of permits that could be reviewed within a given year. The division includes 1 division manger, 3 team leaders, 7 planners, 3 specialty planners, 1 planning tech and 5.5 administrative support personnel. As noted above, this number of employees has remained the same for the last 8 years, except during 2004, when 1 planner was assigned to bi-annual code amendment program (i.e., division reduced its personnel needs by 1 FTE).

Based upon the 2003 capacity analysis, the typical planner could process about 71 reviews per year (i.e., 4 Type I Reviews, 18 Type II Review, 18 Type III Reviews; 36 Pre-Application conferences and 2 Appeals). The 2002 capacity analysis established a division-wide theoretical capacity of 1234 permits per year, and an effective capacity of 1177 permits per year (Note: this does not include SEPA reviews because SEPA is a review process and not a land use permit). Team Leaders are also required to process some reviews each year, thereby adding 12 reviews for a total effective capacity or 1189 reviews per year.

In 2005, the division took on a number of Type I reviews for the Permit Services Division from about April through October. This represented an overall increase in Type I reviews of about 150 permits or a 50% increase. The division also discontinued the bi-annual code amendment program, and, thereby, returning 1 planner back to the review team (i.e., retuning the division back to an effective capacity of 1189 permits per year).

Of the total 2104 land use permits issued in 2005, the Permit Services Division was assigned 270 type I Reviews and Administration was assigned 134 archeological reviews. Excluding these reviews conducted by other divisions, less the 200 SEPA reviews, leaves a balance of 1500 reviews conducted by Development Services in 2005.

Given an effective capacity of 1189 reviews per year, Development Services operated over capacity in 2005 by 323 permits (i.e., $1500 - 1189 = 311$). This was accomplished primarily by shifting the 3 team leaders into primarily a plan review role, suspending the bi-annual code amendment program, and adding a multitude of overtime hours. (Note: 2005 also witnessed a division turnover of about 5 employees, resulting in less production per employee due to the time required for training and coaching).

In 2006, Development Services anticipates issuing about 1553 land use permits (i.e., $1500 - 150$ Type I reviews returning to Permit Services = 1350×1.15 or 15% increase = 1553). The 1553 permits equates to 364 permits over the effective capacity of Development Services (i.e., $1553 - 1189 = 364$).

Overtime does provide some additional capacity, but employees have the option to take the 1.5 overtime hours as comp time, and, thereby, actually reducing the overall capacity within the year. Overtime can serve as a good short term option, but over the long term, the effectiveness of employees suffers and the production reduces. During 2005, the overtime hours totaled _____, _____ hours of which were taken as comp time. Given the effective capacity of 71 reviews per year per planner, this equates to the need for about 4.5 additional planners.

The increase in subdivisions this last year has resulted in an increased number and length of public hearings. The standard hearing nights are the 1st, 2nd and 4th Thursday evenings. Due to the substantial increase in subdivision activity, however, the county has been holding hearings on every Tuesday and Thursday evening, and has begun hearings an hour earlier. The additional hearings required more overtime/comp. time for our planners.

Under state law, the county may adopt provisions whereby the short plat administrative review process (vs. the standard public hearing review process) can apply to land divisions of 9 or less lots (vs. the existing 4 lot limit). For 2005, 30 subdivisions included proposals for 5 – 9 lots. Of the 30, 9 were categorized as “In-Fill” subdivisions. If the 9-lot short plat process was in effect for 2005, the county would experience a 21% decrease in cases requiring hearing. Given there are up to 6 cases per hearing, the 9-lot short plat option would not likely reduce the total number of hearings per year, but would reduce their length.

Conclusion:

Development Services operated over capacity during 2005 by 323 permits. With the shifting of some Type I Reviews back to Permit Services (about 150 based upon 2005) and the anticipated 15% increase in permit activity, the division will still be overcapacity

by about 364 permits in 2006. Shifting team leaders to the role of planner to fill this void is appropriate for the short term, but not for the long term. Shifting the bi-annual code amendment program to another division may also serve to fill this void, but this program needs to be housed in the Development Services Division to ensure its effectiveness.

Recommendation:

1. Hire/transfer 3 additional planners to Development Services, with 2 to conduct preliminary plan reviews (1 for the rural team and 1 for the urban team), and 1 to manage the bi-annual code amendment program.
2. Amend the Clark County Code to allow the administrative review of short plats up to 9-lot land divisions.